

For creation of separate district in Lehi School boundary  
By petition cosponsor Wendy Shoop

One of the things that all people hold dear is the ability to choose. There are many reasons that I think we need to divide the district. If a business had 1500 dissatisfied customers, how long would it stay in business? That is how many citizens signed the petition. If you paid for a product that malfunctioned, would you get your money back? Not if it is a education. If our police only worked 1 out of seven days how safe would you feel? That is the level of representation Lehi has on the school board.

1) The issue of curriculum is a vital choice. The ability to have our students taught what we value as a community is important. We need to have a curriculum that is challenging. I know parents who love the Investigations program, others think it is dumbing down their kids. If we have local control of curriculum, it may not change but it will be more likely to reflect the educational needs of the local population. One of the fears that people have is spending money and resources and not getting the best product. Let's bring the choice of curriculum back to our town.

2) Some say that taxes will go up. Property taxes have gone up for the past 3 years I've lived here. But the question should be: how much will they go up and where will it be spent? Is that under local control? Meaning the people in Lehi decide how much to tax and where to spend those dollars. We need to address the issues on a local basis and be able to respond with laser accuracy, not the shot gun approach where everybody gets air conditioning because I want it for my school.

3) The state sees the need for more representation on school boards with large populations. But how much influence can one board member have if there are 6 vote against them? If every board member lived in Lehi High boundaries there would be more focus on the local needs. People would know who is making the decisions and they would live just down the street.

These are just a few of the reasons to proceed with the petition. Because it really comes down to bringing the choice back to the people whom it effects the most. Let's vote FOR LOCAL CONTROL.



Kristi Seely

**Our current education system in Alpine School District is not meeting the needs of the student, parents, or educators.**

Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight of the basic purposes of schooling, and of the high expectation and disciplined effort needed to attain them. Education is one of the chief engines of a society's material well-being. Half of our children face a lifetime of despair and poverty because we are failing to prepare them with high-quality academic and character education.<sup>1</sup> This preventable problem is the most significant moral issue of our time.

In 1984, a landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*,<sup>2</sup> called our attention to the decline of educational achievement among high school graduates—and the sobering consequences of poverty, discrimination, ill-health and violence. Something must be done to make the educational process more effective. I believe the solution is to bring the school district back down to a manageable student population size. Many studies have been done in the last two decades that clearly show the benefits of smaller schools *AND* smaller districts.

**Governance:**

Governance is one of the benefits of smaller districts. The educators are able to debate current policies and procedures together and avoid the pitfalls of bureaucratization that occurs in large school districts. People must get involved in order for our schools to work. Having a smaller district will not only allow more parental involvement, but will need more parental involvement. Sometimes, when an organization gets too big, everyone feels that it is someone else's responsibility to take care of things. Smaller districts promote an "ownership" mentality.

**Student & School Achievement:**

Of all the benefits of smaller districts, personalization is the most important benefit. The personal relationships established between teachers, students, and administrators fosters a sense of closeness and of working together toward the common goal of learning. All of the teachers know all of the administrators and vice versa. With this interpersonal relationship between administrators and teachers, schools with disadvantaged and troubled children are less likely to fall between the cracks.

In small districts, administrators and teachers lose their anonymity and have to produce. Administrators will also recognize quickly which teachers are having difficulties and will be able to help each individual teacher on a one-to-one level. Both teacher and administrator will be

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<sup>1</sup>Cotton, Kathleen. 2000. *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance*. Northwest Regional Education Laboratory. [www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org)

<sup>2</sup>Excellence in Education, The National Commission On. 1984. *A Nation at Risk, The Full Account*. Westford, Massachusetts: Murray Printing Company.



better able to resolve issues within a short amount of time. With learning and behavior issues quickly resolved, all students will receive a better education. Only in a small district will the administrators really know all of the teachers. They know who is late, who is unprepared, and who, in quiet and unexpected ways, comes through for their kids and colleagues.

Another benefit of smaller districts will be an increase in student achievement. The main areas of student achievement we can measure are: higher graduation rates, higher standard test scores, and better overall attendance. High rates of student participation have long been recognized as one of the strengths of smaller schools and districts.

Higher standard test scores is also a common element in the smaller districts. This measurement alone cannot give a true picture of the quality of the education in the schools. Although it has always been one of the ways to assess the education provided, test scores have also been highly criticized. A research study done by the Utah Foundation points out that test results show, "student performance on norm-referenced achievement tests is highly correlated with socio-economic (SES) factors such as income, racial and ethnic background, parents educational attainment levels, transiency, and the stability of families."

Researchers have studied the effect of larger school districts on student behavior for some time. Social behavior of ethnic minority and low-SES students is even more positively impacted by small schools than that of other students. ( ie. students in the poorer, but smaller districts score higher in their expected range than do those in larger districts.)

### **Climate:**

The climate of smaller districts is quite different from that of larger districts. The climate of a district includes the community, safety, and accountability for teachers and students.

One key feature of small districts is that everyone's participation is needed for teams and clubs to have an adequate number of members. This is true of students as well as teachers. Because the participation of all is needed, there is a greater sense of being needed and feeling important. When everyone is participating together for a common goal, they tend to care about one another to a much greater degree than in larger districts.

If the climate is small enough to allow students to participate, they will feel a sense of belonging and contribution to the educational community. Higher attendance is also a common thread with the smaller schools and districts. The motivation factor to attend and participate seemed to be higher in the smaller districts. Their individual strengths and weaknesses are more easily identified. Small districts feel more like communities than bureaucracies.

### **Conclusion:**

There are numerous advantages in having smaller districts. And I believe that those advantages are worth all the work it takes to bring them about. Our children's future depends on it!



May 27, 2004

Dear Committee Members,

On my behalf, and that of all sponsors of this petition, we want to thank you for your efforts on preparing this important feasibility study. We appreciate your thorough efforts and are grateful for this opportunity to express our opinions on this matter.

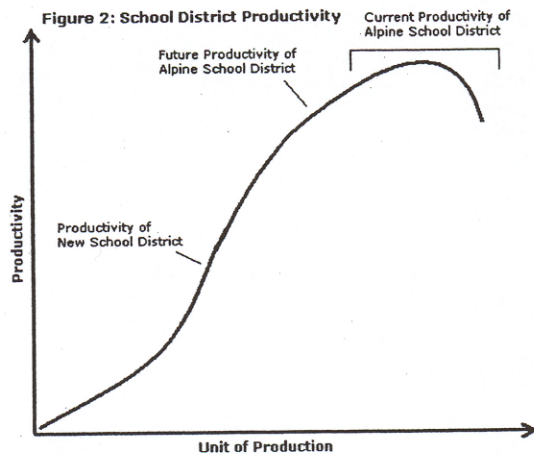
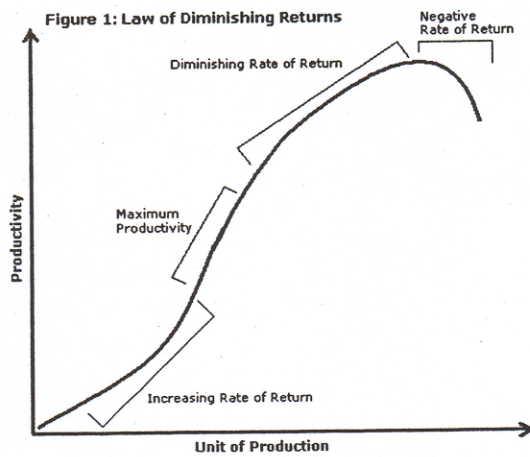
In this letter I will share the main four reasons why I sponsored this petition to create a separate school district for the Lehi, Saratoga Springs, Eagle Mountain area.

First, many fellow citizens and I desire a new, smaller school district in order to gain more personal control over our children's education. The current boundaries of the Alpine School District are so large the voice of a single citizen gets largely diluted among the many other voices and interests. The result is a general detachment between the school district officers and parents. This creates a feedback loop (a vicious cycle): as citizen involvement diminishes, the school district reacts by providing more services without parents' input, which in turn generates more feelings of disenfranchisement and results in less citizen involvement. While gathering signatures for this petition, I was even surprised at the prompt willingness of almost everyone I approached to sign the petition (I estimate a 98% positive response among those I approached). Most of them express some form of frustration at the unresponsiveness of the Alpine School District due to its large size. I believe that the smaller proposed school district will promote citizen involvement, increase parents' control over their children's education, and enhance relationships between school district officials and parents.

Second, a smaller school district will help us in our communities to focus on better management of limited resources. One of the tactics used by those who oppose to the proposed division is to claim that the small school district will not have an adequate tax base to offer all the necessary services and programs. They claim that only by keeping the huge tax base of the Alpine School District will the needs of new communities such as Eagle Mountain and Saratoga Springs be met. This is just a scare tactic and please let me explain by drawing on an analogy. When Saratoga Springs was just a development its citizens could have chosen to incorporate with Lehi or to form their own city. Some may have feared that such a small community, without any businesses, could not even provide for the essential services, let alone for desirable civic services. However, the great majority decided to establish a new city and elected wise city managers who build the community with a zero debt policy. It is true that the city offices have been housed in a trailer, and that we do not yet have a city library, but taxes have not been raised, essential services have been amply provided, and Saratoga Springs remains in the black. This is the type of resource management the citizens in our communities have come to expect. This is not a matter of raising more taxes; it is a matter of applying good management. I believe that the new school district will have more than sufficient resources to provide for all the necessary academic programs and we will have the opportunity to better focus our limited resources.



Third, dividing the school districts as proposed will increase productivity of school district administrative personnel. One of the best-proven laws of Economics is the law of diminishing returns. This law describes the marginal rate of return per added production unit. The well-known s-shape curve shows how productivity changes as more resources are added to an organization (see Fig. 1). To maximize economic productivity, organizations should strive to function right at the inflection point maximizing productivity. It is a well-documented phenomenon that large bureaucratic organizations, such as the current Alpine School District, usually function at the diminishing or negative rate of return part of this curve. The best strategy to increase productivity is to split these organizations. By dividing the school district as petitioned, the new school district will have an opportunity to function as a highly productive organization and it will give a chance for the remaining Alpine School District to increase productivity too (see Fig. 2).



Fourth, the new school district will be more focused on academic achievement. As I was gathering signatures for this petition, one of the most often expressed wishes from my fellow citizens was their desire for the school district to stay focused on academics. From the instructional point of view, it is the natural tendency of large educational organizations to expand their sphere of influence: with more resources at their disposal and more diverse interests to satisfy, it is easy to loose focus and attempt to be everything for everyone. Research and standardized test results show that smaller school districts, with limited resources; outperform larger ones in academic achievement. The proposed new school district will enhance the students' academic performance by staying focused on its core academic interest.

Again, I thank you for your good work and analysis and for the opportunity to share our reasons for sponsoring this important petition.

Yours truly,

Pablo J. Riboldi, PhD



## INPUT ON CREATION OF PIONEER SCHOOL DISTRICT

By petition cosponsor Representative David N. Cox

The decision to pursue division of the Alpine School District is one that has had a lot of thought and study given to it. Alpine district is not the largest district in the state or nation, though it is 4<sup>th</sup> largest in the state and among the largest 100 out of 14,000 districts nationwide. Alpine is not a "problem" district as compared to many big city districts. However it is growing fast with over 50,000 students. So what compels so many people to want to create their own, community district? Perhaps I cannot speak for all of them, but here are my reasons.

1. Research, of which I have collected some on my website at [www.smallerschools.org](http://www.smallerschools.org), supports the notion that a smaller structure will give a better product, at a better price long term, while building the citizens at the same time. While all groupings are benefited, numerous studies particularly point to the fact that lower-income areas are the most benefited by having smaller districts and schools. My own studies of Utah included on my website show this to be the case.
2. Nationally larger districts put a smaller percentage of their revenue directly to the classroom. They have a larger bureaucracy. Some have said they become more of a social agency than an educational agency. For those willing to read it, there is much research supporting the idea that the best thing we could do for public education is to divide the large districts, reintroducing them to the communities they serve. The only way to contain the ever-increasing growth in programs and costs for education is to bring it back to the local community level and schools' "community councils" don't do that. They have neither real power nor responsibility. They don't control budgets, taxes, curriculum, or personnel. They are merely a nice way to get buy-in from the patrons.
3. There is even more research supporting the absolute need to build smaller schools to bring accountability, safety, academic improvement, parental involvement, connectedness, and even teacher retention. This is combined with the fact that the most accurate predictor of school size is district size (i.e. the larger the district, the larger the schools). This is proving more and more to be true in Alpine School District. I do not believe we will be able to pass the next bond for buildings if we stay together. This will mean even larger schools. In similar growth areas in the country, this has eventually led to schools of three to five thousand students. We already have elementary schools of over 1400.

These are perhaps my biggest reasons for desiring a new district. It will bring more accountability from the educators and the taxpayers toward each other than all the state-imposed accountability or tax-cap schemes devised. Does this guarantee things will be better? No, it only makes it more likely. Freedom is always somewhat of a risk, but it provides much more opportunity. When the United States split off from Britain, it did not appear economically to be a wise choice, at least in the short term, but it sure has been long term.



We as families and as a nation have a moral imperative to the next generation to build for them the foundation upon which they may receive the best education possible. Next to parenting, this is our most important stewardship.

Two definitions of Education:

**Modern Dictionary (1980):**

The action or process of educating or of being educated; a stage of such a process; the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process; the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools.

**Webster Dictionary (1828):**

The bringing up, as of a child; instruction; formation of manners. Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline, which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper and form the manners and habits of youth and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.

A thorough unbiased and accurate study must be done within a timeframe in which dissemination of well-researched facts can counter the tactics (manipulation by hysteria with inundation of copious amounts of negative material) already employed by those who simply fear change or loss of power that is magnified in unchecked burgeoning bureaucracies. Good intentions do not necessarily translate into productive policy. How can we hope to have a realistic vote by informed citizens at this point now that the well has already been poisoned? The news outlets need to be enlightened by the appropriate school officials regarding the flaws in the BYU study as well as the above gross misinformation circulating throughout our communities.

Rep. Cox has sacrificed years of time and energy in this endeavor to improve education. "Trailblazers" throughout history have been met with skepticism at best, character assassination at worst. It takes character and courage to stand by one's principles while those who attack the idea of the proposed split haven't given it the unbiased scrutiny it deserves. An overall paradigm shift will allow all schools to receive a bigger bang for their buck. The Baldrige approach (an example given relates a major change in an Alaskan School District that improved efficiency and allowed costs to be transferred from administrative overhead to teacher's bonuses and the students who's scores dramatically improved.) This is one of many examples that demonstrate the actual need for a tax increase may not need to be nearly as much as the naysayers predict. Do we really need grandiose buildings that serve as monuments to bureaucracy with pricey architectural costs along with other unnecessary frills? There is a phenomenal growth rate in Lehi and Saratoga Springs. Eagle Mountain, in a brief period of six years grew from 250 to over 10,000 residents.

There are many other costs associated with "mega-schools" that need to be factored into our conclusions because the economy of scale only works to a certain point and some things cannot be measured. Some children do well in large schools, but not every child has supportive parents and well established value systems. Therefore we must



create a culture, systems and processes to keep other kids from “falling through the cracks”. If a principal doesn’t know all of the students, the school is too large. If the teachers do not know all of the students, the school is too large. If the student doesn’t know the principal and all of the teachers, then the school is too large. Anonymity breeds feelings of isolation and discouragement. Disenfranchised parents withdraw emotional investment and participation in a system in which they also feel isolated and unwelcome. Taxpayers are less apt to pass bonds when they feel left out of the loop and see their money being handled in a frivolous manner. The school is the heart of the community. Traditionally the schools reflect and support community standards and values. When students do not have a sense of belonging or identity there is greater proliferation of cliques, which are difficult to break into or out of. Children literally or figuratively get lost in the system. There are many other costs associated with mega-schools and systems such as transportation risks and expense, safety and security issues, spread of disease and mental health issues. There are numerous studies available that support the above assertions.

Thank you for your care and concern for the children of our communities.

Linn Strouse  
Petitioner